

Message

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Sent: 4/16/2019 11:01:04 PM
To: Orme-Zavaleta, Jennifer [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=3c5a111dc377411595e5b24b5d96146b-Orme-Zavaleta, Jennifer]
CC: Blackburn, Elizabeth [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=a080eb90549a453aaa6a357f5257c0b7-Blackburn, Elizabeth]
Subject: FYI. Chemical Watch on formaldehyde

Hi Jennifer,

Wanted to make sure you saw this story, if you hadn't already: <https://chemicalwatch.com/76492/epa-head-closes-door-on-formaldehyde-iris-assessment>

Article posted today, but references/quotes Wheeler from the HEC budget hearing on April 9. He states that EPA isn't planning to release an IRIS assessment of formaldehyde.

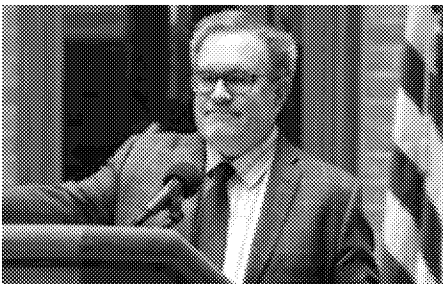
Deliberative Process / Ex. 5

-Lou

EPA head closes door on formaldehyde IRIS assessment

Andrew Wheeler says it's "more important" to go through TSCA

16 April 2019 / Risk assessment, Substances of concern, TSCA, United States



US EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler told a US House of Representatives hearing that the agency's Integrated Risk Information System assessment of formaldehyde will not be released. Work on the assessment has been ongoing for nearly a decade.

"We are not planning to release an evaluation under IRIS, we are planning to release one under TSCA," Mr Wheeler told the Energy and Commerce committee on 9 April. His announcement comes less than a month after formaldehyde was named a candidate for designation as a high priority substance for evaluation under TSCA.

The designation indicates that the EPA believes it should prioritise evaluating the substance – which is used widely in building materials and as a preservative – to determine if it presents an unreasonable risk

of injury to health or the environment. If designated a high priority, the agency will begin its risk evaluation process on formaldehyde at the end of this year.

Mr Wheeler's announcement will raise NGO fears that the proposed designation means that the IRIS assessment will not be finalised.

"We decided that it was more important to go ahead and put formaldehyde through the TSCA programme because at the end of the day we can regulate formaldehyde under TSCA," he told lawmakers at the hearing on the EPA's 2020 budget. "You cannot regulate a chemical under IRIS."

Mr Wheeler cited the length of the IRIS assessment process – "a minimum of 18 months" for formaldehyde – as a factor in the agency's decision.

In response to questions by Representative Paul Tonko (D–New York), the EPA head indicated that the work already completed on the IRIS assessment would inform formaldehyde's risk evaluation under TSCA.

However, the timeline is the subject of dispute. Richard Denison, lead senior scientist for the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), said Mr Wheeler had "provided no basis for his 18-month claim."

Dr Denison says 18 months should be enough to finish the IRIS assessment in time for it to "serve as a point of reference for the TSCA office", since the latter has a deadline of completion between December 2022 and June 2023.

The revelation that the formaldehyde assessment will not be published comes after nearly a decade of controversy on the subject. As far back as 2010, industry disputed a draft assessment linking the substance to leukaemia. And last year, there were concerns that the agency was intentionally burying the report.

Just this month, the April update of IRIS's 'programme outlook' indicated that the agency was open to restarting the formaldehyde assessment. It was listed among other non-priority assessments that "have been suspended but may be restarted."

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